7:Layard E-5' (1914-1915) 1942
0012 Malekula 0012

"This rite had the effect of conferring a high rank—that of *na-humbe*, on the whaler. Henceforth, the natives will speak of her as of a person. When her owners desire to make a voyage in her, they say, '*N.* [the whaler] *e rong a vala—Niouyet e rong a vi Bu*,' '*N.* wishes to sail—N. wants to go to Ambrym," etc. And if, one day, a mishap should occur on some reef, they will perform mortuary rites as for a chief.[1] . . .

"This initial consecration affects only the whaler's hull. There will soon be another to 'bless' the sail, and its mast; then, lastly, for the rudder.

"These three rites have consecrated the whole whaler and her rigging: N. [the whaler] has become a chief, and she lives in a house, also 'blessed.' As I have already said, no woman may either touch her, or go aboard. If, one day, a neighbouring white man takes it into his head to approach the native owners with a view to borrowing their whaler, the elders whom he has approached will stipulate as part of the contract that the white man shall undertake, under pain of paying a high fine, to respect the taboo against women." [2]

The consecrated canoe acquires the "soul" and rank of (a) *the sacrificed tusker, and* (b) *its owner, the sacrificer.*

Another result of its consecration is to confer on the canoe, or whaler, a "soul" through identification with the chief sacrificial tusker whose title it assumes. Since the owner, i.e. the sacrificer, himself takes the same title, it is clear that this rite is in fact another form of Maki, in which not only the man, but also the canoe, takes on the rank of the sacrificed boar, and the two are, in this respect, identical.

Godefroy describes in moving terms the fate of a boat whose owner had died. The whaler was found "apparently abandoned under an old shelter. [The vessel had been bought in Noumea, and they had paid 2000 francs for it.[3]] It is no longer in use . . . simply because the chief shareholder (two clans shared in the purchase) has died, and, since then, none of his relatives have dared to revivify the 'soul' [4] of this whaler. . . .

[1] See below, p. 536.

[2] Godefroy, I, 1934, pp. 56-7. On one occasion, the young men of Pete-hul lent their "Comet" (see p. 470) to a young planter from a neighbouring isle, for a considerable sum. Several months later, the elders of Pete-hul, having found out that the young planter had allowed his wife aboard, went into a great rage, and forced their young clansmen who had arranged the affair to pay over to them the whole of the money they had received as rent.

[3] At pre-war rate of exchange. The incident took place about 1915.

[4] Godefroy does not record the native word which he translates "soul." The endowing of a canoe with individuality which this rite implies recalls Rivers's description, I, vol. 3, pp. 170-1, of a rite performed at the launching of a canoe in Mota and Merlav which is similar to that carried out at the birth of a child.

1:Layard E-5 (1914-1915) 1942
OO12 Malekula OO12

"When Masing [1] and his relatives bought this whaler, the elders of their clan consecrated it by sacrificing a valuable tusked boar, by which act the whaler assumed the rank of the sacrificed tusker. Now, the boar in question was a *na-humbe*, and the vessel had thus been promoted to the rank of chief. Several months later, they consecrated, by means of sacrifices and other rites, its sail, its masts, its rudder, and finally its hold. In this way, the 'Queen'—that was the boat's name—had acquired the rank of high chief, and thenceforth no woman might go aboard, or even touch her. Masing and his whaler had now become one and the same person, and, when Masing died, the 'soul' of his whaler followed its master, in other words disappeared. It will not return to inhabit its timbers again till that day on which a fresh sacrifice is made similar to the first. Meanwhile, the vessel is dead, but, for all that, has not lost her consecrated character. And if, either through meanness, or fearing the considerable outlay necessary for repairs, no one decides to become Masing's successor, the 'Queen' will rot to pieces where she is, and her shelter will also collapse and die." [2]

"MORTUARY" RITES FOR A WRECKED SEA-GOING CANOE

So strong is the belief in the personal existence of a canoe that has thus been raised to high rank through sacrifice, that such craft are considered not only to live like human beings of high rank, but also, literally, to "die," and at their "death" they are accorded corresponding funerary rites.

Godefroy recounts how, during a storm, a whaler, named "Comet," after Halley's comet, which was brilliantly visible in the New Hebrides, was wrecked while an all-night dance was in progress in honour of the boat-shed they were erecting for it (they were all drunk).. The "Comet" was driven on to the reef on the opposing mainland shore, and disappeared.

"On about the fifth day, when the sea had again become calm, the elders of the clan despatched several reliable men to conduct a search on the reef in order to establish the fact of the 'Comet's' 'death.' The seekers returned with the remains of the keel which they had found wedged between two coral rocks. The elders then held a debate, during the course of which they decided to begin forthwith the ceremonies proper to the death of a chief: the sounding of gongs and all-night dances lasting ten days; they began that very night.

"Nor was that all. On the thirtieth day of this mourning, men of

[1] Masing is not a title of high rank. Names are so frequently changed during the successive Maki rites that white men, not bothering themselves with native rites, frequently continue to call a man by the name he bore when they first knew him. This may be a case in point.

[2] Godefroy, I, 1932, p. 226.